

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 101178

EXDIS

FOL VALLETTA 00969 SENT ACTION USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT INFO
SECSTATE USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS APR 18, 1978 REPEATED TO
YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 00969

SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

EXDIS

FOR ADM SHEAR AND GEN HAIG FROM AMB LAINGEN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, MT, IT

SUBJECT: MINTOFF INVITATION TO ADMIRAL SHEAR

REF: USDOCOSOUTH DTG 150904Z APR 78

1. VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR INFORMING US OF INVITATION
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FROM MINTOFF THROUGH MALTESE CONSUL GENERAL NAPLES. TO
SUMMARIZE, I SUGGEST THIS APPROACH BE KEPT IN THE HOLDING
PATTERN WHERE YOU APPEAR TO HAVE PUT IT, AT LEAST UNTIL WE
SEE WHAT COMES OF MARIO FELICE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON THIS
WEEK AND UNTIL THE NOW RESUMED MINTOFF DIALOGUE WITH
ITALIANS AND FRENCH MOVES FURTHER ALONG.

2. MINTOFF'S TACTICAL PURPOSES IN EXTENDING THIS INVITATION SEEM REASONABLY CLEAR; I.E. TO INVOLVE THE SENIOR NATO COMMANDER IN THE AREA IN SUPPORT OF HIS EFFORTS TO GET ITALIANS AND FRENCH (AND ULTIMATELY GERMANS AND US) TO MOVE MORE RAPIDLY AND SYMPATHETICALLY IN SUPPORT OF MINTOFF'S NEUTRALITY CONCEPT. IN LIGHT OF THOSE PURPOSES WE THINK YOUR ASBESTOS GLOVE RESPONSE WAS EXACTLY RIGHT.

3. AS YOU KNOW USG POLICY IS TO KEEP THE EUROPEANS OUT IN FRONT ON THE ISSUE OF POST-1979 MALTA, A POLICY WHICH DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR PLAYING SOME SUPPORTIVE ROLE WHEN WE SEE HOW THE DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEANS EVOLVES. THAT BASIC POLICY POSTURE HAS RECENTLY BEEN REITERATED BY WASHINGTON IN THE INTERAGENCY REVIEW OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN MALTA JUST COMPLETED. (STATE 90253 BEING REPEATED.)

4. CONTRARY TO WHAT THE MALTESE CONSUL GENERAL ALLEGED TO YOU THE DIALOGUE WITH THE EUROPEANS HAS NOT PROVED BARREN - CERTAINLY NOT YET. IT WAS BARREN FOR SOME SIX MONTHS, IN GOOD PART BECAUSE OF MINTOFF HAVING BROKEN OFF THE DIALOGUE, BUT IT IS NOW RESUMED AND A FURTHER SESSION IS SCHEDULED FOR ROME IN EARLY MAY. MINTOFF OF COURSE HAS HIS OWN REASONS FOR ALLEGING TO YOU AND OTHERS THAT THE FRENCH AND ITALIANS ARE BEING UNRESPONSIVE; AS YOU NOTE, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO PULL OUT ALL STOPS IN HIS QUEST FOR ECONOMIC CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSISTANCE AS WE MOVE CLOSER TO MARCH 1979.

5. THE CONSUL GENERAL'S CONTENTION TO YOU THAT MINTOFF IS PREPARED TO EXCLUDE THE ITALIANS AND FRENCH FROM THE ISLAND IS MORE OF MINTOFF'S GAMESMANSHIP, AS IS HIS CLAIM THAT HE HAS NOT CHOSEN TO INVOKE THE WIDE VARIETY OF "OTHER DIPLOMATIC" CHANNELS SUPPOSEDLY OPEN TO HIM. MINTOFF HAS FELT SOME HEAT FROM THE LIBYANS RECENTLY, PARTICULARLY ON CONCESSIONARY OIL PRICE ARRANGEMENTS AND MEDIAN LINE ISSUES, AND AS A RESULT WE THINK MINTOFF HAS BEEN REMINDED OF THE UNATTRACTIVENESS OF GOING SOLO WITH THE ARABS. MOREOVER, AS THE CONSUL GENERAL POINTED OUT, THE VAST MAJORITY OF MALTESE HAVE A WESTERN ORIENTATION, AS WELL AS A CULTURAL AVERSION TO LIBYANS, A POLITICAL FACT OF LIFE WHICH MINTOFF CANNOT IGNORE.

6. THAT BEING SAID, AND WHILE CONTINUING TO REMIND BOTH THE MALTESE AND THE EUROPEANS THAT WE BELIEVE POST-1979 MALTA SHOULD BE DEALT WITH AS A REGIONAL ISSUE ON A REGIONAL BASIS, WE HAVE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT WE ARE OPEN TO DIALOGUE WITH THE MALTESE. IN THIS CONNECTION WASHINGTON HAS AGREED TO RECEIVE MARIO FELICE AS MINTOFF'S

EMISSARY, TO HEAR IN THIS DIRECT FASHION WHAT MINTOFF HAS IN MIND FOR MALTA AND WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM US. FELICE LEAVES TODAY FOR WASHINGTON AND WILL SEE UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM LATER THIS WEEK.

7. PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THIS DEVELOPMENT, AS WELL AS THE RESUMED EUROPEAN DIALOGUE, WE THINK THE POSTURE YOU TOOK ON MINTOFF'S INVITATION IS EXACTLY RIGHT FOR THE PRESENT. AS WE READ YOUR REPORT, YOU HAVE NOT REJECTED MINTOFF'S OVERTURE COMPLETELY, NOTING INSTEAD SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED AND PUTTING IT IN A KIND OF HOLDING PATTERN. WE THINK IT SHOULD STAY THERE FOR NOW. WE ASSUME WE WILL WANT TO KEEP OUR OPTIONS AS OPEN AS POSSIBLE AS THINGS DEVELOP WITH THE EUROPEANS, AND THE POSSIBILITY
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OF AN INFORMAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN YOU AND MINTOFF ON SOME OF THE STRATEGIC REALITIES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN IS ONE THAT COULD BE USEFUL AT SOME POINT. WE MUST EMPHASIZE HOWEVER, THAT FOR THE PRESENT, WE HAVE NO REASON TO THINK HE HAS MADE ANY FUNDAMENTAL ADJUSTMENT IN HIS POLITICAL/STRATEGIC VIEW OF MALTA AND THE SUPERPOWER PRESENCE IN EITHER MALTA OR THE MEDITERRANEAN GENERALLY.

8. MEANWHILE, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU REPEAT TO WASHINGTON THE REPORT ON YOUR CONVERSATION (AND WE ARE DOING THE SAME WITH THIS MESSAGE) FOR THEIR INFORMATION AND FOR WHATEVER COMMENT THEY MAY HAVE. LAINGEN UNQUOTE
CHRISTOPHER

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